

REMARKS

Claims 1 and 3-35 are pending in this application. By this Amendment, claims 1, 3 and 6 have been amended and claim 2 has been canceled. Claim 1 has been amended to more fully distinguish claim 1 from Lee. Claim 3 has been amended to correct dependency. Claim 6 is rewritten in independent form.

No new matter has been added by this Amendment. Support for the language added to claim 1 can be found in original claim 2 and paragraph 28 of the specification. Support for the language added to claim 6 can be found in original claim 1.

The courtesies extended to Applicants' representative by Examiner Kassa at the interview held December 14, 2004, are appreciated. The reasons presented at the interview as warranting favorable action are incorporated into the remarks below and constitute Applicants' record of the interview.

I. Allowable Subject Matter

Applicants note with appreciation that claims 6-35 are allowable. By this Amendment, claim 6 is rewritten in independent form so as to be in condition for allowance.

II. Rejection Under 35 U.S.C. §102(b)

Claims 1-5 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as allegedly being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 5,583,659 ("Lee"). This rejection is respectfully traversed.

Lee discloses a gray-scale scanner that uses area gradients to reduce background noise in an image. See column 5, lines 4-11 and Fig. 1 of Lee. However, contrary to the Examiner's allegations, Lee does not teach or suggest an inner square of the structuring element *A* having a side dimension *N*, and an outer square having a side dimension *M*, wherein *N* represents a largest speckle that can be removed and *M* represents a dimension the speckle lies from other objects as recited in claim 1.

Though the Patent Office cited column 7, lines 36-51 in Lee as teaching this feature, during the interview, Examiner Kassa agreed with Applicants' representative that Lee does not teach or suggest this feature. Also, during the interview, Examiner Kassa agreed that M represents a dimension the speckle lies from other objects.

For the foregoing reasons, Applicants respectfully submit that claims 1 and 3-5 are patentable over Lee. Reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection are thus respectfully submitted.

III. Conclusion

In view of the foregoing, it is respectfully submitted that this application is in condition for allowance. Favorable reconsideration and prompt allowance of claims 1 and 3-35 are earnestly solicited.

Should the Examiner believe that anything further would be desirable in order to place this application in even better condition for allowance, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the telephone number set forth below.

Respectfully submitted,

Leana Levin

James A. Oliff
Registration No. 27,075

Leana Levin
Registration No. 51,939

JAO:LL/hs

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OLIFF & BERRIDGE, PLC
P.O. Box 19928
Alexandria, Virginia 22320
Telephone: (703) 836-6400

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